

Summer reading from UC Davis authors: beer, poetry, history and more

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From music and history to beer and poetry, new books by UC Davis authors offer something for every reader this summer.

"Contents May Have Shifted" by Pam Houston

(W.W. Norton and Co., \$25.95, 320 pages) — In her latest novel, bestselling author Houston, a professor of English and director of the Creative Writing Program at UC Davis, takes her readers on a spiritual journey — and a trip around



The choices are many: New books from UC Davis include all genres: novels, poetry, biography, history, memoir, scientific analysis and more. (Gregory Urquiaga/UC Davis photo illustration)

the world. A key theme of the book: We all have baggage, so we might as well get used to traveling with it. Houston is the author of two collections of short stories, "Cowboys Are My Weakness" (W.W. Norton), which won the 1993 Western States Book Award and has been translated into nine languages, and "Waltzing the Cat" (W.W. Norton), which won the Willa Award for Contemporary Fiction. Her stories have been selected for the 1999 volumes of "Best American Short Stories," "The O. Henry Awards" and "The Pushcart Prize." Her story, "The Best Girlfriend You Never Had," was John Updike's only addition to "Best American Short Stories of the Century."

"Malaquias Montoya" by Terezita Romo (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, distributed by University of Minnesota Press, \$24.95, 200 pages) — This is a major biography of Montoya, a professor emeritus in Chicana/o studies at UC Davis and one of the most influential painters, printmakers and muralists of his generation. Montoya, who has taught at UC Davis for more than 20 years, describes his own work this way: "As a Chicano artist I feel a responsibility that all my art should be a reflection of my political beliefs — an art of protest. The struggle of all people cannot be merely intellectually accepted. It must become part of our very being as artists, otherwise we cannot give expression to it in our work."

"Hotels, Hospitals, and Jails" by Anthony Swofford (Twelve, \$26.99, 276 pages) — This second memoir by Swofford, a UC Davis alumnus and Gulf War veteran, takes on his relationship with his father, also a veteran and Marine. "My father and I lived with the wickedly exciting and doggedly exhausting knowledge that we had once, for a short period of time, flirted with death and won," he writes. Swofford earned his bachelor's degree in English from UC Davis in 1999.

"Hand Me Down" by Melanie Thorne (Dutton Books, \$25.95, 311 pages) — In her first novel, Thorne, a graduate of the English master's degree program at UC Davis, tells the story of a girl who travels between California and Utah in search of her true family. The book, based on the author's own life, has been selected by the School Library Journal for its "Adult Books 4 Teens" list. The publisher describes it as "a tough, tender, debut novel."

"Certain Uncollected Poems," by Sandra McPherson (Swanscythe Press, \$17.50, 60 pages) — McPherson, an emeritus professor of English at UC Davis, gathers some of her previously published poems into her latest book. " 'Certain Uncollected Poems' is meant to extend the life of writings that I never found chance or occasion to weave into other books," says the author. McPherson's honors and awards include three National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, a Guggenheim fellowship, two Ingram Merrill grants, an Award in Literature from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and a nomination for the National Book Award. She was featured on the Bill Moyers television series "The Language of Life."

"Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West" by Beth E. Levy (University of California Press, \$34.95, 470 pages) — Examining the works of such composers as Aaron Copland, Roy Harris and Virgil Thomson, Levy, an associate professor of music at UC Davis, looks at how western Americana was woven into American culture by way of sheet music, radio, lecture recitals, the concert hall and film. The author says of her book: "American music has almost always been discussed in comparison with European classical music, but that comparison obscures major regional and ethnic differences within American music."

"California: On-the-Road Histories" by Laurie Glover and Victor

Silverman (Interlink Publishing, \$22, 390 pages) — California has a tumultuous history, from the European conquest to today's economic woes, and this book presents the sometimes bitter, often triumphant history behind the California myth with humor. It also includes recommendations for tourist destinations. The book is one in a series of on-the-road guides offered by the publisher. Glover is a lecturer in the UC Davis University Writing Program. Silverman teaches history at Pomona College.

"Charles Munch" by D. Kern Holoman (Oxford University Press, \$35, 352 pages) — This first full biography of violinist and conductor Munch traces the giant of 20th-century music from his dramatic survival in occupied Paris through his triumphant arrival at the Boston Symphony Orchestra and his later years, when he was known and admired by presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy. Author Holoman is a professor of music at UC Davis and conductor emeritus of the UC Davis Symphony Orchestra.

"From Goods to a Good Life: Intellectual Property and Global Justice" by Madhavi Sunder (Yale University Press, \$35, 272 pages) — Sunder, a law professor at UC Davis, calls for a richer understanding of the impact of intellectual property law on social and cultural life, not just economics. The author writes in her introduction, "Intellectual property law bears considerably on central features of human flourishing, from the developing world's access to food, textbooks and essential medicines; to the ability of citizens everywhere to participate democratically in political and cultural discourse; to the capacity to earn a livelihood from one's intellectual contributions... ."

"Foam" by Charles Bamforth (American Society for Brewing Chemists, \$39.95, 80 pages) — First in a forthcoming series by Bamforth titled "Practical Guides to Beer Quality," this book examines the more technical aspects of beer foam — but lightly. Among other topics, the volume tackles the age-old debate about whether beer is better from a glass or a can. "Despite my frequent protestations that the only civilized way to sip beer is from a glass, I am prepared to admit that there are drinking occasions when the informal approach is relevant — when fishing, for example," writes Bamforth, professor in the UC Davis Department of Food Science and Technology. He adds: "I do not fish." Bamforth is also the author of "Beer Is Proof God Loves Us," published in 2010. ("Foam" is available directly from the publisher).

"As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality" by Michael Saler (Oxford University Press, 27.95, 304 pages) — Saler, an associate professor of history at UC Davis, traces the world's fascination with virtual reality back hundreds of years. Readers will learn, among other things, that Sherlock Holmes was an early virtual reality character.

"Time's Shadow: Remembering a Family Farm in Kansas" by Arnold J. Bauer (Kansas University Press, \$24.95, 176 pages) — In chapters with titles such as "Houses," "Depression and Drought" and "Having Company," Bauer examines a way of life that has disappeared. Bauer is an emeritus professor of history at UC Davis.

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Media contact(s):

- Karen Nikos, UC Davis News Service, (530) 752-6101, kmnikos@ucdavis.edu

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